

**City of Cambridge Recycling Advisory Committee, Council Chambers, 795 Mass. Ave.  
June 14, 2017, minutes taken by Joel Dashnaw**

**Members present:** Ilana Bebhick, Joel Dashnaw, David Frank, Debby Galef, Rob Gogan, Susy Jones, Debby Knight, Laura Nichols, Michael Papas, Meera Singh, Matthew St. Onge, Mary Verhage, Kristen Watkins

**Members Absent:** Keith Cialino, Martha Henry, Janet Mosley, Liz Marr, Anne Sherman, Quinten Steenhuis

**Staff Present:** Meryl Brott, Camilla Elvis, John Fitzgerald, John Nardone, Owen O’Riordan, Mike Orr

**Members of the Public Present:** Judy Nathans, Helen Snively,

Meeting began at 8:05AM

**Housekeeping:**

- Minutes from last meeting will be considered at the next meeting.

**City Updates:**

- Congrats to Meryl & Rob for receiving Cambridge DPW Commissioner’s Awards this year.
- Meryl has worked on outreach, increasing capacity.
- Rob has been on RAC since 1993.
- Staff Update: New Program manager, beginning in July.
- Continuing to make updates to marketing and website.
- Moving forward on increasing composting to citywide.

**Commissioner O’Riordan’s (COR) Comments:**

Citywide curbside compost rollout: April 2018

Will be hiring 4 new employees, and buying a new packer.

Also will begin to consider curbside recycling for small-scale commercial.

Want to work more closely with DEP and sister cities.

MO: How do we increase collection of curbside organics? How do we increase participation rates?

RG: Decrease yuck factor. HDR (consultants) suggested using solid-sided ventilated-top kitchen containers. Perhaps a focus group should be run to see which kitchen container the residents prefer?

MO: DPW will be trying out two different solid-sided vented-top containers to see which one residents like better.

KW: Recology in San Francisco experience: advised people put their compost in the freezer to avoid smells and flies.. There was also a huge spike in participation once a regulation mandating composting was introduced.

DK: Perhaps a focus group? Perhaps the fact that the curbside program is a pilot and not a citywide ordinance is contributing to lower participation levels. Perhaps once the program goes citywide there will be an increase in participation.

IB: Education needs to be ongoing: care-packaging, flyers on doors, videos on website, etc.

DG: More specific education.

MSO: Do we know what items are creating the yuck factor?

MO: The yuck factor comes from a variety of things: wetter foods, or trying to save money by using fewer bags, etc. We want to focus on the positives. People love to brag about how little trash they create.

IB: Can paper bags be used?

MO: Yes, they can be used. We prefer for those to be recycled, and we don't advertise that, but yes.

KW: What about combining compost and yard waste?

MO: The value of the food scraps is higher through anaerobic digestion.

MS: There is little awareness out there. We need more prominent marketing and outreach.

COR: The recent funds that were promised are for not only labor and trucks, but also marketing and outreach.

MV: How does using a garbage disposal compare to composting?

JN: City discourages kitchen disposers due to the flat sewer lines in the city, which create clogging problems of fats, greases, and oils. We recognize that people are going to use them to some degree, but we don't want to encourage that as the first place for disposal of food waste.

COR: Example of sewer problems: in 1998 near Alewife there were backup problems of a half mile of material that cost around \$600,000 to remove. Similar problems have occurred in Harvard Square, Central Square, and on First Street.

KW: Perhaps DPW could give back finished compost to residents?

MO: Yes, we've done so in the past and will do so in the future, in small amounts.

RG: What is the current thinking on trash limitations for residences? Pay as you throw? Providing an official cart?

COR: We would consider those options, but they would need to be considered by the Council, as they affect how people do things and costs. It is something that the Council hopes to consider within the next few years. We advocate using carts and cart tipplers to help prevent worker injuries. It will be an inevitable part of the solution that we do need to look at.

MO: What are other things we can do to move towards ZW, besides organics?

RG: Suggestions: limits on trash. Currently over 150 gallons per week per household. How to charge for overflow. Limits on trash. Need to look at that carefully.

DG: We should explore mattress recycling more. UTEC. Perhaps dropoff?

KW: In SF the limit was 32 Gallons per week. Opportunity to consider commercial element as well. Transient nature of population should also be considered.

DK: More education at schools (colleges & U's). Move outs are a particular problem. Bulky items are also of high importance.

DG: Some bulky items can't be reused and we have to consider their disposal.

MO: Education? Any ideas?

RG: A new logo? A lot of power in repeating the message.

MO: Working on a new logo.

SJ: Move outs and off campus housing: might be effective to see some data about move outs and the impacts. Perhaps get some hard data and put out a report on this issue.

DK: A few years ago we did some evening walks and took notes. I don't know where that data is.

MO: We have daily trash tonnage data, to establish a baseline might be tough, but we might be able to come up with an estimate.

DG: Connecting with utility companies to send out info on behalf of Cambridge. Also, connect with Somerville.

MO: Bus wraps.

KW: Hang reminders on people's carts (a little flyer).

MO: There will be a group of high school students who will be placing stickers on carts this summer to encourage behaviors.

RG: What will the new waste reduction manager be doing?

MO: She will be mostly working on outreach initially, increasing participation. Increasing marketing, utilizing photos as much as possible.

COR: We have two community relation managers who primarily work on construction. We will be able to devote additional resources towards this waste reduction in the future.

IB: Would be good if the RAC could provide advice on final advertising documents before they are sent out.

MSO: The Waste Wizard is a real opportunity and should be advertised. Video in online newsletter was really well done.

DG: Drop-off hours need to be improved. Any kind of expansion would be good. Perhaps a Sunday drop-off date?

RG: On Somerville website, they instruct what to put into the trash, as well as the recycling. More explicit instructions for Cambridge would be beneficial.

MO: We can communicate better that the default should be recycling and not trash.

COR: .....The idea of having incentives to successful recyclers might be part of our program. How do we make this attractive to people? We want to aggressively pursue this in the commercial realm. We have to have a program manager and an inspector.

MO: We will be rolling out two programs at the same time (curbside compost and commercial recycling).

RG: OCC cardboard is very valuable. Perhaps work on increasing recycling of cardboard? What practices can we promote that can help increase diversion of recycling?

**Action Items:**

To Research:

- Data on bulky items and move out, find old data & get more data?
- Perhaps initiate a focus group or survey to get more info from the residents?
- Increased education and outreach efforts
- Volume limitation on trash

**Announcements:**

JD: Will coordinate a tour of WM CORE site, Charlestown for July.